

Dear Bay County Taxpayers:

When we started the millage rate outside cities that charge property tax was 14.67 mills – It is now 11.16 mills.

We focused on the School Boards management and expenditures related to the half cent sales tax. Through our efforts and the information we provided to the public, the effort to continue the tax for another 10 years was defeated.

We started a petition drive through our web site, the News Herald and taking petitions out to the public. The petition was for the County Commission to cap any increase in spending to no more than 3% per year. The County Commission enacted that cap.

We supported Amendment One. Realizing it was not the entire goal but an important step for the taxpayers of Florida. The amendment passed and with that passage the message from taxpayers was clear. Less taxes!

We supported the efforts by the Tax and Budget Reform Commission – Chaired by Allen Bense. The TBRC is bringing a ballot question for Floridians to vote on. The voters will have a choice to replace the RLE-Required Local Effort for School Districts with a sales tax. All Bay County property owners would see a millage reduction of 4.81 mills. If we can get this amendment passed it would bring the millage rate from its current 11.16 mills to 6.35 mills. Again, that is for all property owners.

We have just completed a study showing the increase in legal fees by government entities in Bay County. The study also showed which firms were used and what their fees were. The study covered a 5 year period and showed that the legal expenses had basically doubled in the last 5 years.

We are currently in the process of collecting information to show what the long term debt is for Bay County governments and CRA's. That study will be completed soon and the results will be sent to our members and posted on our web site.

Our web site has averaged over 110,000 hits in the last 12 months with over 6,000 visits. We have posted our study results and input we have received from both members and the general public.

One of the most difficult and important tasks the Bay Tax Foundation has accomplished is our success in becoming a Florida not-for-profit corporation and a 501(c)(3) tax deductible organization. That status ensures the integrity of the organization as it manages membership dues – our only source of financial support. It also allows those supporting members to deduct the amount of their financial support with the IRS.

We have collected the budgets of all taxing authorities for the last 5 years and have them on file at our office.

The future challenges for taxpayers in Bay County and for Bay Tax Foundation and its members are significant. (1) Keeping taxes from increasing. (2) Fighting the effort to replace taxes with new fees and excise type taxes. (3) Providing an independent look at government spending. (4) Stopping the increase of government long term debt. (5) Continuing the effort to get the State of Florida and all local governments to adopt a TABOR - Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

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